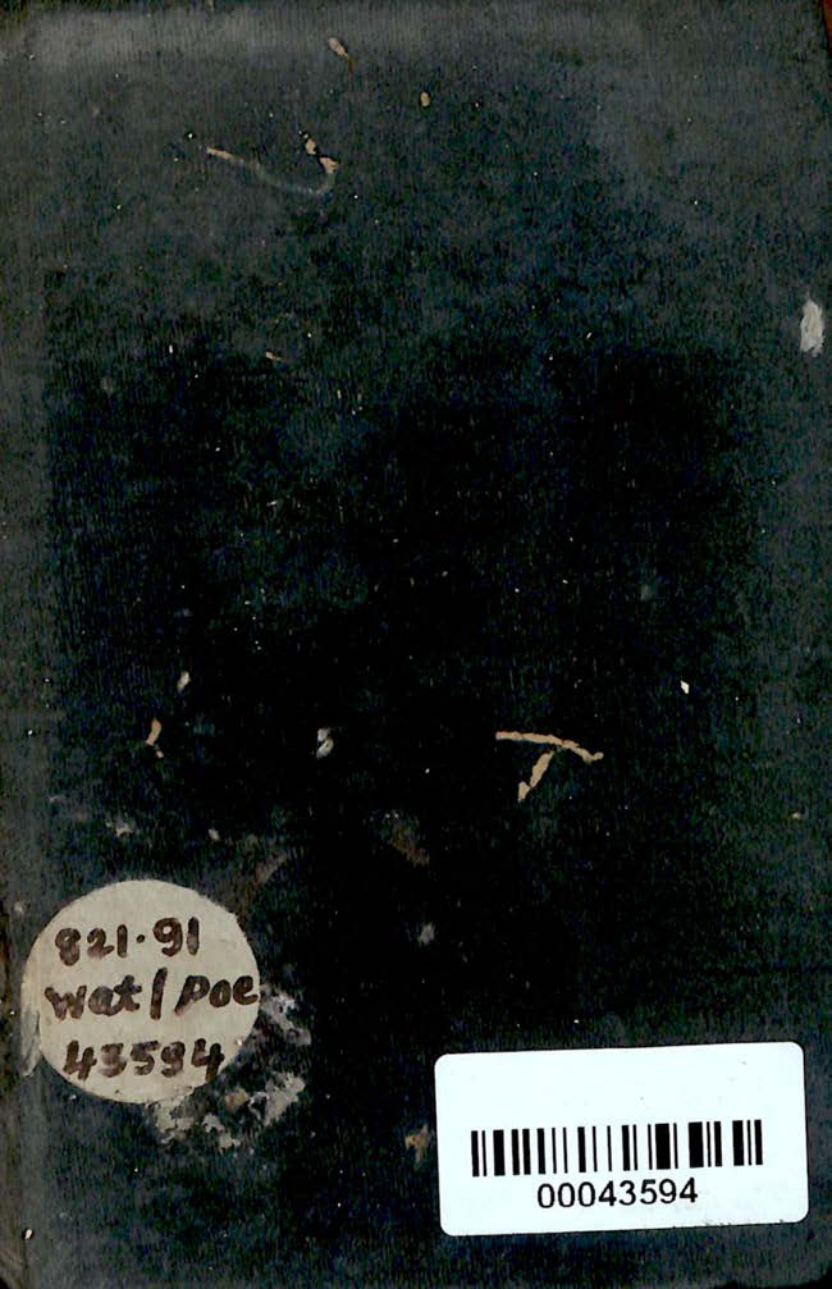
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POEMS

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BY

WILLIAM WATSON

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS volume is in substance mainly a reprint of the second edition of "Wordsworth's Grave and Other Poems," with the addition of twenty-six short pieces, most of which have already been contributed to periodicals. For kind permission to include them here, my thanks are due to the Editors of the *Spectator*, the *Illustrated London News*, the *Anti-Jacobin*, and the *Academy*.

W. W.

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MISCELLANEOUS

PRELUDE

THE mighty poets from their flowing store
Dispense like casual alms the careless ore;
Through throngs of men their lonely way they go,
Let fall their costly thoughts, nor seem to know.—
Not mine the rich and showering hand, that strews
The facile largess of a stintless Muse.
A fitful presence, seldom tarrying long,
Capriciously she touches me to song—
Then leaves me to lament her flight in vain,
And wonder will she ever come again.

AUTUMN

Thou burden of all songs the earth hath sung,
Thou retrospect in Time's reverted eyes,
Thou metaphor of everything that dies,
That dies ill-starred, or dies beloved and young
And therefore blest and wise,—
O be less beautiful, or be less brief,
Thou tragic splendour, strange, and full of fear!
In vain her pageant shall the Summer rear?
At thy mute signal, leaf by golden leaf,
Crumbles the gorgeous year.

Ah, ghostly as remembered mirth, the tale
Of Summer's bloom, the legend of the Spring!
And thou, too, flutterest an impatient wing,
Thou presence yet more fugitive and frail,
Thou most unbodied thing,
Whose very being is thy going hence,
And passage and departure all thy theme;
Whose life doth still a splendid dying seem,
And thou at height of thy magnificence
A figment and a dream.

Stilled is the virgin rapture that was June,
And cold is August's panting heart of fire;
And in the storm-dismantled forest-choir
For thine own elegy thy winds attune
Their wild and wizard lyre:
And poignant grows the charm of thy decay,
The pathos of thy beauty, and the sting,

Thou parable of greatness vanishing!
For me, thy woods of gold and skies of grey
With speech fantastic ring.

For me, to dreams resigned, there come and go,
'Twixt mountains draped and hooded night and morn,
Elusive notes in wandering wafture borne,
From undiscoverable lips that blow
An immaterial horn;
And spectral seem thy winter-boding trees,
Thy ruinous bowers and drifted foliage wet—
O Past and Future in sad bridal met,
O voice of everything that perishes,
And soul of all regret!

WORLD-STRANGENESS

STRANGE the world about me lies,
Never yet familiar grown—
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me like a face half known.

In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gemlike plains and seas,
Shall I never feel at home,
Never wholly be at ease?

On from room to room I stray,
Yet my Host can ne'er espy,
And I know not to this day
Whether guest or captive I.

So, between the starry dome
And the floor of plains and seas,
I have never felt at home,
Never wholly been at ease.

"WHEN BIRDS WERE SONGLESS"

When birds were songless on the bough
I heard thee sing.
The world was full of winter, thou
Wert full of spring.

To-day the world's heart feels anew
The vernal thrill,
And thine beneath the rueful yew
Is wintry chill.

THE MOCK SELF

FEW friends are mine, though many wights there be
Who, meeting oft a phantasm that makes claim
To be myself, and hath my face and name,
And whose thin fraud I wink at privily,
Account this light impostor very me.
What boots it undeceive them, and proclaim
Myself myself, and whelm this cheat with shame?
I care not, so he leave my true self free,
Impose not on me also; but alas!
I too, at fault, bewildered, sometimes take
Him for myself, and far from mine own sight,
Torpid, indifferent, doth mine own self pass;
And yet anon leaps suddenly awake,
And spurns the gibbering mime into the night.

"THY VOICE FROM INMOST DREAMLAND CALLS"

Thy voice from inmost dreamland calls;
The wastes of sleep thou makest fair;
Bright o'er the ridge of darkness falls
The cataract of thy hair.

The morn renews its golden birth:
Thou with the vanquished night dost fade;
And leav'st the ponderable earth
Less real than thy shade.

IN LALEHAM CHURCHYARD

(AUGUST 18, 1890)

'TWAS at this season, year by year,
The singer who lies songless here
Was wont to woo a less austere,
Less deep repose,
Where Rotha to Winandermere
Unresting flows,—

Flows through a land where torrents call
To far-off torrents as they fall,
And mountains in their cloudy pall
Keep ghostly state,
And Nature makes majestical
Man's lowliest fate.

There, 'mid the August glow, still came
He of the twice-illustrious name,
The loud impertinence of fame
Not loth to flee—
Not loth with brooks and fells to claim
Fraternity.

Linked with his happy youthful lot,
Is Loughrigg, then, at last forgot?
Nor silent peak nor dalesman's cot
Looks on his grave.
Lulled by the Thames he sleeps, and not
By Rotha's wave.

'Tis fittest thus! for though with skill
He sang of beck and tarn and ghyll,
The deep, authentic mountain-thrill
Ne'er shook his page!

Somewhat of worldling mingled still
With bard and sage.

And 'twere less meet for him to lie
Guarded by summits lone and high
That traffic with the eternal sky
And hear, unawed,
The everlasting fingers ply
The loom of God,

Than, in this hamlet of the plain,
A less sublime repose to gain,
Where Nature, genial and urbane,
To man defers,
Yielding to us the right to reign,
Which yet is hers.

And nigh to where his bones abide,
The Thames with its unruffled tide

Seems like his genius typified,—
Its strength, its grace,
Its lucid gleam, its sober pride,
Its tranquil pace.

But ah! not his the eventual fate
Which doth the journeying wave await—
Doomed to resign its limpid state
And quickly grow
Turbid as passion, dark as hate,
And wide as woe.

Rather, it may be, over-much
He shunned the common stain and smutch,
From soilure of ignoble touch
Too grandly free,
Too loftily secure in such
Cold purity.

But he preserved from chance control
The fortress of his 'stablisht soul;
In all things sought to see the Whole;
Brooked no disguise;
And set his heart upon the goal,
Not on the prize.

With those Elect he shall survive
Who seem not to compete or strive,
Yet with the foremost still arrive,
Prevailing still:
Spirits with whom the stars connive
To work their will.

And ye, the baffled many, who,
Dejected, from afar off view
The easily victorious few
Of calm renown,—

Have ye not your sad glory too,
And mournful crown?

Great is the facile conqueror;
Yet haply he, who, wounded sore,
Breathless, unhorsed, all covered o'er
With blood and sweat,
Sinks foiled, but fighting evermore,—
Is greater yet.

THE FLIGHT OF YOUTH

YOUTH! ere thou be flown away,
Surely one last boon to-day
Thou'lt bestow—
One last light of rapture give,
Rich and lordly fugitive!
Ere thou go.

What, thou canst not? What, all spent?
All thy spells of ravishment
Pow'rless now?
Gone thy magic out of date?
Gone, all gone that made thee great?—
Follow thou!

"NAY, BID ME NOT MY CARES TO LEAVE"

NAY, bid me not my cares to leave,
Who cannot from their shadow flee.
I do but win a short reprieve,
'Scaping to pleasure and to thee.

I may, at best, a moment's grace,
And grant of liberty, obtain;
Respited for a little space,
To go back into bonds again.

A CHILD'S HAIR

A LETTER from abroad. I tear
Its sheathing open, unaware
What treasure gleams within; and there—
Like bird from cage—
Flutters a curl of golden hair
Out of the page.

From such a frolic head 'twas shorn!
('Tis but five years since he was born.)
Not sunlight scampering over corn
Were merrier thing.
A child? A fragment of the morn,
A piece of Spring!

Surely an ampler, fuller day
Than drapes our English skies with grey—
A deeper light, a richer ray
Than here we know—
To this bright tress have given away
Their living glow.

For Willie dwells where gentian flowers
Make mimic sky in mountain bowers;
And vineyards steeped in ardent hours
Slope to the wave
Where storied Chillon's tragic towers
Their bases lave;

And over piny tracts of Vaud
The rose of eve steals up the snow;
And on the waters far below
Strange sails like wings

Half-bodilessly come and go,
Fantastic things;

And tender night falls like a sigh
On *châlet* low and *château* high;
And the far cataract's voice comes nigh,
Where no man hears;
And spectral peaks impale the sky
On silver spears.

Ah, Willie, whose dissevered tress
Lies in my hand!—may you possess
At least one sovereign happiness,
Ev'n to your grave;
One boon than which I ask naught less,
Naught greater crave:

May cloud and mountain, lake and vale,
Never to you be trite or stale

As unto souls whose wellsprings fail
Or flow defiled,
Till Nature's happiest fairy-tale
Charms not her child!

For when the spirit waxes numb,
Alien and strange these shows become,
And stricken with life's tedium
The streams run dry,
The choric spheres themselves are dumb,
And dead the sky,—

Dead as to captives grown supine,
Chained to their task in sightless mine:
Above, the bland day smiles benign,
Birds carol free,
In thunderous throes of life divine
Leaps the glad sea;

But they—their day and night are one.
What is 't to them, that rivulets run,
Or what concern of theirs the sun?
It seems as though
Their business with these things was done
Ages ago:

Only, at times, each dulled heart feels
That somewhere, sealed with hopeless seals,
The unmeaning heaven about him reels,
And he lies hurled
Beyond the roar of all the wheels
Of all the world.

. . . . .

On what strange track one's fancies fare!
To eyeless night in sunless lair
'Tis a far cry from Willie's hair;
And here it lies—

Human, yet something which can ne'er
Grow sad and wise:

Which, when the head where late it lay
In life's grey dusk itself is grey,
And when the curfew of life's day
By death is tolled,
Shall forfeit not the auroral ray
And eastern gold.

THE KEY-BOARD

FIVE-AND-THIRTY black slaves,
Half-a-hundred white,
All their duty but to sing
For their Queen's delight,
Now with throats of thunder,
Now with dulcet lips,
While she rules them royally
With her finger-tips!

When she quits her palace,
All the slaves are dumb—
Dumb with dolour till the Queen
Back to Court is come:

Dumb the throats of thunder,
Dumb the dulcet lips,
Lacking all the sovereignty
Of her finger-tips.

Dusky slaves and pallid,
Ebon slaves and white,
When the Queen was on her throne
How you sang to-night!
Ah, the throats of thunder!
Ah, the dulcet lips!
Ah, the gracious tyrannies
Of her finger-tips!

Silent, silent, silent,
All your voices now;
Was it then her life alone
Did your life endow?

Waken, throats of thunder!
Waken, dulcet lips!
Touched to immortality
By her finger-tips.

"SCENTLESS FLOW'RS I BRING THEE"

SCENTLESS flow'rs I bring thee—yet
In thy bosom be they set;
In thy bosom each one grows
Fragrant beyond any rose.

Sweet enough were she who could,
In thy heart's sweet neighbourhood,
Some redundant sweetness thus
Borrow from that overplus.

ON LANDOR'S "HELLENICS"

COME hither, who grow cloyed to surfeiting
With lyric draughts o'ersweet, from rills that rise
On Hybla not Parnassus mountain: come
With beakers rinsed of the dulcifluous wave
Hither, and see a magic miracle
Of happiest science, the bland Attic skies
True-mirrored by an English well;—no stream
Whose heaven-belying surface makes the stars
Reel, with its restless idiosyncrasy;
But well unstirred, save when at times it takes
Tribute of lover's eyelids, and at times
Bubbles with laughter of some sprite below.

TO ———

(With a Volume of Epigrams)

Unto the Lady of The Nook
Fly, tiny book.
There thou hast lovers—even thou!
Fly thither now.

Seven years hast thou for honour yearned,
And scant praise earned;
But ah! to win, at last, *such* friends,
Is full amends.

ON EXAGGERATED DEFERENCE TO FOREIGN LITERARY OPINION

WHAT! and shall *we*, with such submissive airs
As age demands in reverence from the young,
Await these crumbs of praise from Europe flung,
And doubt of our own greatness till it bears
The signet of your Goethes or Voltaires?
We who alone in latter times have sung
With scarce less power than Arno's exiled tongue—
We who are Milton's kindred, Shakespeare's heirs.
The prize of lyric victory who shall gain
If ours be not the laurel, ours the palm?

More than the froth and flotsam of the Seine,
More than your Hugo-flare against the night,
And more than Weimar's proud elaborate calm,
One flash of Byron's lightning, Wordsworth's light.

ENGLAND TO IRELAND

(February 1888)

Spouse whom my sword in the olden time won me,
Winning me hatred more sharp than a sword—
Mother of children who hiss at or shun me,
Curse or revile me, and hold me abhorred—
Heiress of anger that nothing assuages,
Mad for the future, and mad from the past—
Daughter of all the implacable ages,
Lo, let us turn and be lovers at last!

Lovers whom tragical sin hath made equal,
One in transgression and one in remorse.

Bonds may be severed, but what were the sequel?
Hardly shall amity come of divorce.
Let the dead Past have a royal entombing,
O'er it the Future built white for a fane!
I that am haughty from much overcoming
Sue to thee, supplicate—nay, is it vain?

Hate and mistrust are the children of blindness,—
Would we but see one another, 'twere well!
Knowledge is sympathy, charity, kindness,
Ignorance only is maker of hell.
Could we but gaze for an hour, for a minute,
Deep in each other's unfaltering eyes,
Love were begun—for that look would begin it—
Born in the flash of a mighty surprise.

Then should the ominous night-bird of Error,
Scared by a sudden irruption of day,

Flap his maleficent wings, and in terror
Flit to the wilderness, dropping his prey.
Then should we, growing in strength and in sweetness,
Fusing to one indivisible soul,
Dazzle the world with a splendid completeness,
Mightily single, immovably whole.

Thou, like a flame when the stormy winds fan it,
I, like a rock to the elements bare,—
Mixed by love's magic, the fire and the granite,
Who should compete with us, what should compare?
Strong with a strength that no fate might dissever,
One with a oneness no force could divide,
So were we married and mingled for ever,
Lover with lover, and bridegroom with bride.

MENSIS LACRIMARUM

(MARCH 1885)

MARCH, that comes roaring, maned, with rampant paws,
And bleatingly withdraws;
March,—'tis the year's fantastic nondescript,
That, born when frost hath nipped
The shivering fields, or tempest scarred the hills,
Dies crowned with daffodils.
The month of the renewal of the earth
By mingled death and birth:
But, England! in this latest of thy years
Call it—the Month of Tears.

"UNDER THE DARK AND PINY STEEP"

UNDER the dark and piny steep
We watched the storm crash by:
We saw the bright brand leap and leap
Out of the shattered sky.

The elements were minist'ring
To make one mortal blest;
For, peal by peal, you did but cling
The closer to his breast.

THE BLIND SUMMIT

[A Viennese gentleman, who had climbed the Hoch-König without a guide, was found dead, in a sitting posture, near the summit, upon which he had written, "It is cold, and clouds shut out the view."—*Vide* the *Daily News* of September 10, 1891.]

So mounts the child of ages of desire,
Man, up the steeps of Thought; and would behold
Yet purer peaks, touched with unearthlier fire,
In sudden prospect virginally new;
But on the lone last height he sighs: "'Tis cold,
And clouds shut out the view."

Ah, doom of mortals! Vexed with phantoms old,
Old phantoms that waylay us and pursue,—

Weary of dreams,—we think to see unfold
The eternal landscape of the Real and True;
And on our Pisgah can but write: "'Tis cold,
And clouds shut out the view."

TO LORD TENNYSON

(With a Volume of Verse)

Master and mage, our prince of song, whom Time,
In this your autumn mellow and serene,
Crowns ever with fresh laurels, nor less green
Than garlands dewy from your verdurous prime;
Heir of the riches of the whole world's rhyme,
Dow'r'd with the Doric grace, the Mantuan mien,
With Arno's depth and Avon's golden sheen;
Singer to whom the singing ages climb,
Convergent;—if the youngest of the choir
May snatch a flying splendour from your name

Making his page illustrious, and aspire
For one rich moment your regard to claim,
Suffer him at your feet to lay his lyre
And touch the skirts and fringes of your fame.

SKETCH OF A POLITICAL CHARACTER

(1885)

THERE is a race of men, who master life,
Their victory being inversely as their strife;
Who capture by refraining from pursuit;
Shake not the bough, yet load their hands with fruit;
The earth's high places who attain to fill,
By most indomitably sitting still.
While others, full upon the fortress hurled,
Lay fiery siege to the embattled world,
Of such rude arts *their* natures feel no need;
Greatly inert, they lazily succeed;
Find in the golden mean their proper bliss,
And doing nothing, never do amiss;

But lapt in men's good graces live, and die
By all regretted, nobody knows why.

Cast in this fortunate Olympian mould,
The admirable * * * * behold;
Whom naught could dazzle or mislead, unless
'Twere the wild light of fatal cautiousness;
Who never takes a step from his own door
But he looks backward ere he looks before.
When once he starts, it were too much to say
He visibly gets farther on his way:
But all allow, he ponders well his course—
For future uses hoarding present force.
The flippant deem him slow and saturnine,
The summed-up phlegm of that illustrious line;
But we, his honest adversaries, who
More highly prize him than his false friends do,
Frankly admire that simple mass and weight—

A solid Roman pillar of the State,
So inharmonious with the baser style
Of neighbouring columns grafted on the pile,
So proud and imperturbable and chill,
Chosen and matched so excellently ill,
He seems a monument of pensive grace,
Ah, how pathetically out of place!

Would that some call he could not choose but heed—
Of private passion or of public need—
At last might sting to life that slothful power,
And snare him into greatness for an hour!

ART MAXIMS

OFTEN ornateness
Goes with greatness;
Oftener felicity
Comes of simplicity.

Talent that's cheapest
Affects singularity.
Thoughts that dive deepest
Rise radiant in clarity.

Life is rough:
Sing smoothly, O Bard.
Enough, enough,
To have *found* life hard.

No record Art keeps
Of her travail and throes.
There is toil on the steeps,—
On the summits, repose.

THE GLIMPSE

Just for a day you crossed my life's dull track,
Put my ignobler dreams to sudden shame,
Went your bright way, and left me to fall back
On my own world of poorer deed and aim;

To fall back on my meaner world, and feel
Like one who, dwelling 'mid some smoke-dimmed town,—
In a brief pause of labour's sullen wheel,—
'Scaped from the street's dead dust and factory's frown,—

In stainless daylight saw the pure seas roll,
Saw mountains pillaring the perfect sky:
Then journeyed home, to carry in his soul
The torment of the difference till he die.

THE BALLAD OF THE "BRITAIN'S PRIDE"

It was a skipper of Lowestoft
That trawled the northern sea,
In a smack of thrice ten tons and seven,
And the *Britain's Pride* was she.
And the waves were high to windward,
And the waves were high to lee,
And he said as he lost his trawl-net,
"What is to be, will be."

His craft she reeled and staggered,
But he headed her for the hithe,
In a storm that threatened to mow her down
As grass is mown by the scythe;

When suddenly through the cloud-rift
The moon came sailing soft,
And he saw one mast of a sunken ship
Like a dead arm held aloft.

And a voice came faint from the rigging—
"Help! help!" it whispered and sighed—
And a single form to the sole mast clung,
In the roaring darkness wide.
Oh, the crew were but four hands all told,
On board of the *Britain's Pride*,
And ever "Hold on till daybreak!"
Across the night they cried.

Slowly melted the darkness,
Slowly rose the sun,
And only the lad in the rigging
Was left, out of thirty-one,

To tell the tale of his captain,
The English sailor true,
That did his duty and met his death
As English sailors do.

Peace to the gallant spirit,
The greatly proved and tried,
And to all who have fed the hungry sea
That is still unsatisfied;
And honour and glory for ever,
While rolls the unresting tide,
To the skipper of little Lowestoft,
And the crew of the *Britain's Pride.*

LINES

(With a Volume of the Author's Poems sent to M. R. C.)

Go, Verse, nor let the grass of tarrying grow
Beneath thy feet iambic. Southward go
O'er Thamesis his stream, nor halt until
Thou reach the summit of a suburb hill
To lettered fame not unfamiliar: there
Crave rest and shelter of a scholiast fair,
Who dwelleth in a world of old romance,
Magic emprise and faery chevisaunce.
Tell her, that he who made thee, years ago,
By northern stream and mountain, and where blow

Great breaths from the sea-sunset, at this day
One half thy fabric fain would rase away;
But she must take thee faults and all, my Verse,
Forgive thy better and forget thy worse.
Thee, doubtless, she shall place, not scorned, among
More famous songs by happier minstrels sung;—
In Shakespeare's shadow thou shalt find a home,
Shalt house with melodists of Greece and Rome,
Or awed by Dante's wintry presence be,
Or won by Goethe's regal suavity,
Or with those masters hardly less adored
Repose, of Rydal and of Farringford;
And—like a mortal rapt from men's abodes
Into some skyey fastness of the gods—
Divinely neighboured, thou in such a shrine
Mayst for a moment dream thyself divine.

THE RAVEN'S SHADOW

SEABIRD, elemental sprite,
Moulded of the sun and spray—
Raven, dreary flake of night
Drifting in the eye of day—
What in common have ye two,
Meeting 'twixt the blue and blue?

Thou to eastward carriest
The keen savour of the foam,—
Thou dost bear unto the west
Fragrance from thy woody home,
Where perchance a house is thine
Odorous of the oozy pine.

Eastward thee thy proper cares,
Things of mighty moment, call;
Thee to westward thine affairs
Summon, weighty matters all:
I, where land and sea contest,
Watch you eastward, watch you west,

Till, in snares of fancy caught,
Mystically changed ye seem,
And the bird becomes a thought,
And the thought becomes a dream,
And the dream, outspread on high,
Lords it o'er the abject sky.

Surely I have known before
Phantoms of the shapes ye be—
Haunters of another shore
'Leaguered by another sea.

There my wanderings night and morn
Reconcile me to the bourn.

There the bird of happy wings
  Wafts the ocean-news I crave;
Rumours of an isle he brings
  Gemlike on the golden wave:
But the baleful beak and plume
Scatter immelodious gloom.

Though the flow'rs be faultless made,
  Perfectly to live and die—
Though the bright clouds bloom and fade
  Flow'rlike 'midst a meadowy sky—
Where this raven roams forlorn
Veins of midnight flaw the morn.

He not less will croak and croak
  As he ever caws and caws,

Till the starry dance be broke,
Till the sphery pæan pause,
And the universal chime
Falter out of tune and time.

Coils the labyrinthine sea
Duteous to the lunar will,
But some discord stealthily
Vexes the world-ditty still,
And the bird that caws and caws
Clasps creation with his claws.

LUX PERDITA

THINE were the weak, slight hands
That might have taken this strong soul, and bent
Its stubborn substance to thy soft intent,
And bound it unresisting, with such bands
As not the arm of envious heaven had rent.

Thine were the calming eyes
That round my pinnace could have stilled the sea,
And drawn thy voyager home, and bid him be
Pure with their pureness, with their wisdom wise,
Merged in their light, and greatly lost in thee.

But thou—thou passed'st on,
With whiteness clothed of dedicated days,
Cold, like a star; and me in alien ways
Thou leftest following life's chance lure, where shone
The wandering gleam that beckons and betrays.

ENGLAND AND HER COLONIES

SHE stands, a thousand-wintered tree,
By countless morns impearled;
Her broad roots coil beneath the sea,
Her branches sweep the world;
Her seeds, by careless winds conveyed,
Clothe the remotest strand
With forests from her scatterings made,
New nations fostered in her shade,
And linking land with land.

O ye by wandering tempest sown
'Neath every alien star,

Forget not whence the breath was blown
That wafted you afar!
For ye are still her ancient seed
On younger soil let fall—
Children of Britain's island-breed,
To whom the Mother in her need
Perchance may one day call.

HISTORY

HERE, peradventure, in this mirror glassed,
Who gazes long and well at times beholds
Some sunken feature of the mummied Past,
But oftener only the embroidered folds
And soiled magnificence of her rent robe
Whose tattered skirts are ruined dynasties
That sweep the dust of æons in our eyes
And with their trailing pride cumber the globe.—
For lo! the high, imperial Past is dead:
The air is full of its dissolvèd bones;
Invincible armies long since vanquishèd,
Kings that remember not their awful thrones,
Powerless potentates and foolish sages,
Impede the slow steps of the pompous ages.

THE EMPTY NEST.

I SAUNTER all about the pleasant place
You made thrice pleasant, O my friends, to me;
But you are gone where laughs in radiant grace
That thousand-memoried unimpulsive sea.
To storied precincts of the southern foam,
Dear birds of passage, ye have taken wing,
And ah! for me, when April wafts you home,
The spring will more than ever be the spring.
Still lovely, as of old, this haunted ground;
Tenderly, still, the autumn sunshine falls;
And gorgeously the woodlands tower around,
Freak'd with wild light at golden intervals:
Yet, for the ache your absence leaves, O friends,
Earth's lifeless pageantries are poor amends.

IRELAND

(DECEMBER 1, 1890)

IN the wild and lurid desert, in the thunder-travelled ways,
'Neath the night that ever hurries to the dawn that still delays,
There she clutches at illusions, and she seeks a phantom goal
With the unattaining passion that consumes the unsleeping soul:
And calamity enfolds her, like the shadow of a ban,
And the niggardness of Nature makes the misery of man:
And in vain the hand is stretched to lift her, stumbling in the gloom,
While she follows the mad fen-fire that conducts her to her doom.

THE LUTE-PLAYER

SHE was a lady great and splendid,
I was a minstrel in her halls.
A warrior like a prince attended
Stayed his steed by the castle walls.

Far had he fared to gaze upon her.
"O rest thee now, Sir Knight," she said.
The warrior wooed, the warrior won her,
In time of snowdrops they were wed.
I made sweet music in his honour,
And longed to strike him dead.

I passed at midnight from her portal,
Throughout the world till death I rove:
Ah, let me make this lute immortal
With rapture of my hate and love!

"AND THESE—ARE THESE INDEED THE END"

And these—are these indeed the end,
This grinning skull, this heavy loam?
Do all green ways whereby we wend
Lead but to yon ignoble home?

Ah well! Thine eyes invite to bliss;
Thy lips are hives of summer still.
I ask not other worlds while this
Proffers me all the sweets I will.

THE RUSS AT KARA

O KING of kings, that watching from Thy throne
Sufferest the monster of Ust-Kara's hold,
With bosom than Siberia's wastes more cold,
And hear'st the wail of captives crushed and prone,
And sett'st no sign in heaven! Shall naught atone
For their wild pangs whose tale is yet scarce told,
Women by uttermost woe made deadly bold,
In the far dungeon's night that hid their moan?
Why waits Thy shattering arm, nor smites this Power
Whose beak and talons rend the unshielded breast,
Whose wings shed terror and a plague of gloom,
Whose ravin is the hearts of the oppressed;
Whose brood are hell-births—Hate that bides its hour,
Wrath, and a people's curse that loathe their doom?

LIBERTY REJECTED

About this heart thou hast
Thy chains made fast,
And think'st thou I would be
Therefrom set free,
And forth unbound be cast?

The ocean would as soon
Entreat the moon
Unsay the magic verse
That seals him hers
From silver noon to noon.

She stooped her pearly head
Seaward, and said:
"Would'st thou I gave to thee
Thy liberty,
In Time's youth forfeited?"

And from his inmost hold
The answer rolled:
"Thy bondman to remain
Is sweeter pain,
Dearer an hundredfold."

LIFE WITHOUT HEALTH

BEHOLD life builded as a goodly house
And grown a mansion ruinous
With winter blowing through its crumbling walls!
The master paceth up and down his halls,
And in the empty hours
Can hear the tottering of his towers
And tremor of their bases underground.
And oft he starts and looks around
At creaking of a distant door
Or echo of his footfall on the floor,
Thinking it may be one whom he awaits
And hath for many days awaited,
Coming to lead him through the mouldering gates
Out somewhere, from his home dilapidated.

TO A FRIEND

Chafing at enforced Idleness from interrupted Health

Soon may the edict lapse, that on you lays
This dire compulsion of infertile days,
This hardest penal toil, reluctant rest!
Meanwhile I count you eminently blest,
Happy from labours heretofore well done,
Happy in tasks auspiciously begun.
For they are blest that have not much to rue—
That have not oft mis-heard the prompter's cue,
Stammered and stumbled and the wrong parts played,
And life a Tragedy of Errors made.

"WELL HE SLUMBERS, GREATLY SLAIN"

WELL he slumbers, greatly slain,
Who in splendid battle dies;
Deep his sleep in midmost main
Pillowed upon pearl who lies.

Ease, of all good gifts the best,
War and wave at last decree:
Love alone denies us rest,
Crueller than sword or sea.

AN EPISTLE

(To N. A.)

So, into Cornwall you go down,
And leave me loitering here in town.
For me, the ebb of London's wave,
Not ocean-thunder in Cornish cave.
My friends (save only one or two)
Gone to the glistening marge, like you,—
The opera season with blare and din
Dying sublime in *Lohengrin*,—
Houses darkened, whose blinded panes
All thoughts, save of the dead, preclude,—
The parks a puddle of tropic rains,—
Clubland a pensive solitude,—

For me, now you and yours are flown,
The fellowship of books alone!

For you, the snaky wave, upflung
With writhing head and hissing tongue;
The weed whose tangled fibres tell
Of some inviolate deep-sea dell;
The faultless, secret-chambered shell,
Whose sound is an epitome
Of all the utterance of the sea;
Great, basking, twinkling wastes of brine;
Far clouds of gulls that wheel and swerve
In unanimity divine,
With undulation serpentine,
And wondrous, consentaneous curve,
Flashing in sudden silver sheen,
Then melting on the sky-line keen;
The world-forgotten coves that seem

Lapt in some magic old sea-dream,
Where, shivering off the milk-white foam,
Lost airs wander, seeking home,
And into clefts and caverns peep,
Fissures paven with powdered shell,
Recesses of primeval sleep,
Tranced with an immemorial spell;
The granite fangs eternally
Rending the blanch'd lips of the sea;
The breaker clutching land, then hurled
Back on its own tormented world;
The mountainous upthunderings,
The glorious energy of things,
The power, the joy, the cosmic thrill,
Earth's ecstasy made visible,
World-rapture old as Night and new
As sunrise;—this, all this, for you!

So, by Atlantic breezes fanned,
You roam the limits of the land,
And I in London's world abide,
Poor flotsam on the human tide!—
Nay, rather, isled amid the stream—
Watching the flood—and, half in dream
Guessing the sources whence it rose,
And musing to what Deep it flows.

For still the ancient riddles mar
Our joy in man, in leaf, in star.
The Whence and Whither give no rest,
The Wherefore is a hopeless quest;
And the dull wight who never thinks,—
Who, chancing on the sleeping Sphinx,
Passes unchallenged,—fares the best!

But ill it suits this random verse

The high enigmas to rehearse,
And touch with desultory tongue
Secrets no man from Night hath wrung.
We ponder, question, doubt—and pray
The Deep to answer Yea or Nay;
And what does the engirdling wave,
The undivulging, yield us, save
Aspersion of bewildering spray?
We do but dally on the beach,
Writing our little thoughts full large,
While Ocean with imperious speech
Derides us trifling by the marge.
Nay, we are children, who all day
Beside the unknown waters play,
And dig with small toy-spade the sand,
Thinking our trenches wondrous deep,
Till twilight falls, and hand-in-hand
Nurse takes us home, well tired, to sleep;

Sleep, and forget our toys, and be
Lulled by the great unsleeping sea.

Enough!—to Cornwall you go down,
And I tag rhymes in London town.

TO AUSTIN DOBSON

YES! urban is your Muse, and owns
An empire based on London stones;
Yet flow'rs, as mountain violets sweet,
Spring from the pavement 'neath her feet.

Of wilder birth this Muse of mine,
Hill-cradled, and baptized with brine;
And 'tis for her a sweet despair
To watch that courtly step and air!

Yet surely she, without reproof,
Greeting may send from realms aloof,
And even claim a tie in blood,
And dare to deem it sisterhood.

For well we know, those Maidens be
All daughters of Mnemosyne;
And 'neath the unifying sun,
Many the songs—but Song is one.

TO EDWARD CLODD

FRIEND, in whose friendship I am twice well-starred,
A debt not time may cancel is your due;
For was it not your praise that earliest drew,
On me obscure, that chivalrous regard,
Ev'n his, who, knowing fame's first steep how hard,
With generous lips no faltering clarion blew,
Bidding men hearken to a lyre by few
Heeded, nor grudge the bay to one more bard?
Bitter the task, year by inglorious year,
Of suitor at the world's reluctant ear.
One cannot sing for ever, like a bird,
For sole delight of singing! Him his mate
Suffices, listening with a heart elate;
Nor more his joy, if all the rapt heav'n heard.

TO EDWARD DOWDEN

On receiving from Him a Copy of "The Life of Shelley"

First, ere I slake my hunger, let me thank
The giver of the feast. For feast it is,
Though of ethereal, translunary fare—
His story who pre-eminently of men
Seemed nourished upon starbeams and the stuff
Of rainbows, and the tempest, and the foam;
Who hardly brooked on his impatient soul
The fleshly trammels; whom at last the sea
Gave to the fire, from whose wild arms the winds
Took him, and shook him broadcast to the world.

In my young days of fervid poesy
He drew me to him with his strange far light,—
He held me in a world all clouds and gleams,
And vasty phantoms, where ev'n Man himself
Moved like a phantom 'mid the clouds and gleams.
Anon the Earth recalled me, and a voice
Murmuring of dethroned divinities
And dead times deathless upon sculptured urn—
And Philomela's long-descended pain
Flooding the night—and maidens of romance
To whom asleep St. Agnes' love-dreams come—
Awhile constrained me to a sweet duresse
And thraldom, lapping me in high content,
Soft as the bondage of white amorous arms.
And then a third voice, long unheeded—held
Claustral and cold, and dissonant and tame—
Found me at last with ears to hear. It sang
Of lowly sorrows and familiar joys,

Of simple manhood, artless womanhood,
And childhood fragrant as the limpid morn;
And from the homely matter nigh at hand
Ascending and dilating, it disclosed
Spaces and avenues, calm heights and breadths
Of vision, whence I saw each blade of grass
With roots that groped about eternity,
And in each drop of dew upon each blade
The mirror of the inseparable All.
The first voice, then the second, in their turns
Had sung me captive. This voice sang me free.
Therefore, above all vocal sons of men,
Since him whose sightless eyes saw hell and heaven,
To Wordsworth be my homage, thanks, and love.
Yet dear is Keats, a lucid presence, great
With somewhat of a glorious soullessness.
And dear, and great with an excess of soul,
Shelley, the hectic flamelike rose of verse,

All colour, and all odour, and all bloom,
Steeped in the noonlight, glutted with the sun,
But somewhat lacking root in homely earth,
Lacking such human moisture as bedews
His not less starward stem of song, who, rapt
Not less in glowing vision, yet retained
His clasp of the prehensible, retained
The warm touch of the world that lies to hand,
Not in vague dreams of man forgetting men,
Nor in vast morrows losing the to-day;
Who trusted nature, trusted fate, nor found
An Ogre, sovereign on the throne of things;
Who felt the incumbence of the unknown, yet bore
Without resentment the Divine reserve;
Who suffered not his spirit to dash itself
Against the crags and wavelike break in spray,
But 'midst the infinite tranquillities
Moved tranquil, and henceforth, by Rotha stream

And Rydal's mountain-mirror, and where flows
Yarrow thrice sung or Duddon to the sea,
And wheresoe'er man's heart is thrilled by tones
Struck from man's lyric heartstrings, shall survive.

FELICITY

A SQUALID, hideous town, where streams run black
With vomit of a hundred roaring mills,—
Hither occasion calls me; and ev'n here,
All in the sable reek that wantonly
Defames the sunlight and deflowers the morn,
One may at least surmise the sky still blue.
Ev'n here, the myriad slaves of the machine
Deem life a boon; and here, in days far sped,
I overheard a kind-eyed girl relate
To her companions, how a favouring chance
By some few shillings weekly had increased
The earnings of her household, and she said:
"So now we are happy, having all we wished,"—

Felicity indeed! though more it lay
In wanting little than in winning all.

Felicity indeed! Across the years
To me her tones come back, rebuking; me,
Spreader of toils to snare the wandering Joy
No guile may capture and no force surprise—
Only by them that never wooed her, won.

O curst with wide desires and spacious dreams,
Too cunningly do ye accumulate
Appliances and means of happiness,
E'er to be happy! Lavish hosts, ye make
Elaborate preparation to receive
A shy and simple guest, who, warned of all
The ceremony and circumstance wherewith
Ye mean to entertain her, will not come.

VER TENEBROSUM

SONNETS OF MARCH AND APRIL 1885

I

The Soudanese

They wrong'd not us, nor sought 'gainst us to wage
The bitter battle. On their God they cried
For succour, deeming justice to abide
In heaven, if banish'd from earth's vicinage.
And when they rose with a gall'd lion's rage,
We, on the captor's, keeper's, tamer's side,
We, with the alien tyranny allied,
We bade them back to their Egyptian cage.
Scarce knew they who we were! A wind of blight
From the mysterious far north-west we came.
Our greatness now their veriest babes have learn'd,
Where, in wild desert homes, by day, by night,
Thousands that weep their warriors unreturn'd,
O England, O my country, curse thy name!

II

HASHEEN

"OF British arms, another victory!"
Triumphant words, through all the land's length sped.
Triumphant words, but, being interpreted,
Words of ill sound, woful as words can be.
Another carnage by the drear Red Sea—
Another efflux of a sea more red!
Another bruising of the hapless head
Of a wrong'd people yearning to be free.
Another blot on her great name, who stands
Confounded, left intolerably alone
With the dilating spectre of her own
Dark sin, uprisen from yonder spectral sands:
Penitent more than to herself is known;
England, appall'd by her own crimson hands.

III

The English Dead

Give honour to our heroes fall'n, how ill
Soe'er the cause that bade them forth to die.
Honour to him, the untimely struck, whom high
In place, more high in hope, 'twas fate's harsh will
With tedious pain unsplendidly to kill.
Honour to him, doom'd splendidly to die,
Child of the city whose foster-child am I,
Who, hotly leading up the ensanguin'd hill
His charging thousand, fell without a word—
Fell, but shall fall not from our memory.
Also for them let honour's voice be heard
Who nameless sleep, while dull time covereth
With no illustrious shade of laurel tree,
But with the poppy alone, their deeds and death.

IV

GORDON

IDLE although our homage be and vain,
Who loudly through the door of silence press
And vie in zeal to crown death's nakedness,
Not therefore shall melodious lips refrain
Thy praises, gentlest warrior without stain,
Denied the happy garland of success,
Foil'd by dark fate, but glorious none the less,
Greatest of losers, on the lone peak slain
Of Alp-like virtue. Not to-day, and not
To-morrow, shall thy spirit's splendour be
Oblivion's victim; but when God shall find
All human grandeur among men forgot,
Then only shall the world, grown old and blind,
Cease, in her dotage, to remember Thee.

V

GORDON (*concluded*)

ARAB, Egyptian, English—by the sword
Cloven, or pierced with spears, or bullet-mown—
In equal fate they sleep: their dust is grown
A portion of the fiery sands abhorred.
And thou, what hast thou, hero, for reward,
Thou, England's glory and her shame? O'erthrown
Thou liest, unburied, or with grave unknown
As his to whom on Nebo's height the Lord
Showed all the land of Gilead, unto Dan;
Judah sea-fringed; Manasseh and Ephraim;
And Jericho palmy, to where Zoar lay;
And in a valley of Moab buried him,
Over against Beth-Peor, but no man
Knows of his sepulchre unto this day.

VI

The True Patriotism

The ever-lustrous name of patriot
To no man be denied because he saw
Where in his country's wholeness lay the flaw,
Where, on her whiteness, the unseemly blot.
England! thy loyal sons condemn thee.—What!
Shall we be meek who from thine own breasts draw
Our fierceness? Not ev'n *thou* shalt overawe
Us thy proud children nowise basely got.
Be this the measure of our loyalty—
To feel thee noble and weep thy lapse the more.
This truth by thy true servants is confess'd—
Thy sins, who love thee most, do most deplore.
Know thou thy faithful! Best they honour thee
Who honour in thee only what is best.

VII

Restored Allegiance

Dark is thy trespass, deep be thy remorse,
O England! Fittingly thine own feet bleed,
Submissive to the purblind guides that lead
Thy weary steps along this rugged course.
Yet . . . when I glance abroad, and track the source
More selfish far, of other nations' deed,
And mark their tortuous craft, their jealous greed,
Their serpent-wisdom or mere soulless force,
Homeward returns my vagrant fealty,
Crying, "O England, shouldst thou one day fall,
Shatter'd in ruins by some Titan foe,
Justice were thenceforth weaker throughout all
The world, and Truth less passionately free,
And God the poorer for thine overthrow."

VIII

The Political Luminary

A skilful leech, so long as we were whole:
Who scann'd the nation's every outward part,
But ah! misheard the beating of its heart.
Sire of huge sorrows, yet erect of soul.
Swift rider with calamity for goal,
Who, overtasking his equestrian art,
Unstall'd a steed full willing for the start,
But wondrous hard to curb or to control.
Sometimes we thought he led the people forth:
Anon he seemed to follow where they flew;
Lord of the golden tongue and smiting eyes;
Great out of season, and untimely wise:
A man whose virtue, genius, grandeur, worth
Wrought deadlier ill than ages can undo.

IX

Foreign Menace

I MARVEL that this land, whereof I claim
The glory of sonship—for it *was* erewhile
A glory to be sprung of Britain's isle,
Though now it well-nigh more resembles shame—
I marvel that this land with heart so tame
Can brook the northern insolence and guile.
But most it angers me, to think how vile
Art thou, how base, from whom the insult came,
Unwieldly laggard, many an age behind
Thy sister Powers, in brain and conscience both;
In recognition of man's widening mind
And flexile adaptation to its growth:
Brute bulk, that bearest on thy back, half loth,
One wretched man, most pitied of mankind.

X

HOME-ROOTEDNESS

I CANNOT boast myself cosmopolite ;
I own to "insularity," although
'Tis fall'n from fashion, as full well I know.
For somehow, being a plain and simple wight,
I am skin-deep a child of the new light,
But chiefly am mere Englishman below,
Of island-fostering ; and can hate a foe,
And trust my kin before the Muscovite.
Whom shall I trust if not my kin? And whom
Account so near in natural bonds as these
Born of my mother England's mighty womb,
Nursed on my mother England's mighty knees,
And lull'd as I was lull'd in glory and gloom
With cradle-song of her protecting seas?

XI

Our Eastern Treasure

In cobwebb'd corners dusty and dim I hear
A thin voice pipingly revived of late,
Which saith our India is a cumbrous weight,
An idle decoration, bought too dear.
The wiser world contemns not gorgeous gear;
Just pride is no mean factor in a State;
The sense of greatness keeps a nation great;
And mighty they who mighty can appear.
It may be that if hands of greed could steal
From England's grasp the envied orient prize,
This tide of gold would flood her still as now:
But were she the same England, made to feel
A brightness gone from out those starry eyes,
A splendour from that constellated brow?

XII

Reported Concessions

So we must palter, falter, cringe, and shrink,
And when the bully threatens, crouch or fly.—
There are who tell me with a shuddering eye
That war's red cup is Satan's chosen drink.
Who shall gainsay them? Verily I do think
War is as hateful almost, and well-nigh
As ghastly, as this terrible Peace whereby
We halt for ever on the crater's brink
And feed the wind with phrases, while we know
There gapes at hand the infernal precipice
O'er which a gossamer bridge of words we throw,
Yet cannot choose but hear from the abyss
The sulphurous gloom's unfathomable hiss
And simmering lava's subterranean flow.

XIII

NIGHTMARE

(*Written during apparent imminence of war*)

IN a false dream I saw the Foe prevail.
The war was ended; the last smoke had rolled
Away: and we, erewhile the strong and bold,
Stood broken, humbled, withered, weak and pale,
And moan'd, "Our greatness is become a tale
To tell our children's babes when we are old.
They shall put by their playthings to be told
How England once, before the years of bale,
Throned above trembling, puissant, grandiose, calm,
Held Asia's richest jewel in her palm;
And with unnumbered isles barbaric, she
The broad hem of her glistering robe impearl'd;
Then, when she wound her arms about the world,
And had for vassal the obsequious sea."

XIV

Last Word: to the Colonies

Brothers beyond the Atlantic's loud expanse;
And you that rear the innumerable fleece
Far southward 'mid the ocean named of peace;
Britons that past the Indian wave advance
Our name and spirit and world-predominance;
And you our kin that reap the earth's increase
Where crawls that long-backed mountain till it cease
Crown'd with the headland of bright esperance:—
Remote compatriots wheresoe'er ye dwell,
By your prompt voices ringing clear and true
We know that with our England all is well:
Young is she yet, her world-task but begun!
By you we know her safe, and know by you
Her veins are million but her heart is one.

EPIGRAMS

EPIGRAMS

'Tis human fortune's happiest height to be
A spirit melodious, lucid, poised, and whole;
Second in order of felicity
I hold it, to have walk'd with such a soul.

The statue—Buonarroti said—doth wait,
Thrall'd in the block, for me to emancipate.
The poem—saith the poet—wanders free
Till I betray it to captivity.

To keep in sight Perfection, and adore
The vision, is the artist's best delight;
His bitterest pang, that he can ne'er do more
Than keep her long'd-for loveliness in sight.

If Nature be a phantasm, as thou say'st,
A splendid fiction and prodigious dream,
To reach the real and true I'll make no haste,
More than content with worlds that only seem.

The Poet gathers fruit from every tree,
Yea, grapes from thorns and figs from thistles he.
Pluck'd by his hand, the basest weed that grows
Towers to a lily, reddens to a rose.

Brook, from whose bridge the wandering idler peers
To watch thy small fish dart or cool floor shine,
I would that bridge whose arches all are years
Spann'd not a less transparent wave than thine!

To Art we go as to a well, athirst,
And see our shadow 'gainst its mimic skies,
But in its depth must plunge and be immersed
To clasp the naiad Truth where low she lies.

In youth the artist voweth lover's vows
To Art, in manhood maketh her his spouse.
Well if her charms yet hold for him such joy
As when he craved some boon and she was coy!

Immured in sense, with fivefold bonds confined,
Rest we content if whispers from the stars
In waftings of the incalculable wind
Come blown at midnight through our prison-bars.

LOVE, like a bird, hath perch'd upon a spray
For thee and me to hearken what he sings.
Contented, he forgets to fly away;
But hush! . . . remind not Eros of his wings.

THINK not thy wisdom can illume away
The ancient tanglement of night and day.
Enough, to acknowledge both, and both revere:
They see not clearliest who see all things clear.

IN mid whirl of the dance of Time ye start,
Start at the cold touch of Eternity,
And cast your cloaks about you, and depart·
The minstrels pause not in their minstrelsy.

THE beasts in field are glad, and have not wit
To know why leapt their hearts when springtime shone.
Man looks at his own bliss, considers it,
Weighs it with curious fingers; and 'tis gone.

MOMENTOUS to himself as I to me
Hath each man been that ever woman bore;
Once, in a lightning-flash of sympathy,
I *felt* this truth, an instant, and no more.

THE gods man makes he breaks; proclaims them each
Immortal, and himself outlives them all:
But whom he set not up he cannot reach
To shake His cloud-dark sun-bright pedestal.

THE children romp within the graveyard's pale;
The lark sings o'er a madhouse; or a gaol;—
Such nice antitheses of perfect poise
Chance in her curious rhetoric employs.

OUR lithe thoughts gambol close to God's abss,
Children whose home is by the precipice.
Fear not thy little ones shall o'er it fall:
Solid, though viewless, is the girdling wall.

LIVES there whom pain hath evermore pass'd by
And Sorrow shunn'd with an averted eye?
Him do thou pity, him above the rest,
Him of all hapless mortals most unbless'd.

SAY what thou wilt, the young are happy never.
Give me bless'd Age, beyond the fire and fever,—
Past the delight that shatters, hope that stings,
And eager flutt'ring of life's ignorant wings.

ONWARD the chariot of the Untarrying moves;
Nor day divulges him nor night conceals;
Thou hear'st the echo of unreturning hooves
And thunder of irrevocable wheels.

A DEFT musician does the breeze become
Whenever an Æolian harp it finds:
Hornpipe and hurdygurdy both are dumb
Unto the most musicianly of winds.

I FOLLOW Beauty; of her train am I:
Beauty whose voice is earth and sea and air;
Who serveth, and her hands for all things ply;
Who reigneth, and her throne is everywhere.

TOILING and yearning, 'tis man's doom to see
No perfect creature fashion'd of his hands.
Insulted by a flower's immaculacy,
And mock'd at by the flawless stars he stands.

FOR metaphors of man we search the skies,
And find our allegory in all the air.
We gaze on Nature with Narcissus-eyes,
Enamour'd of our shadow everywhere.

ONE music maketh its occult abode
In all things scatter'd from great Beauty's hand;
And evermore the deepest words of God
Are yet the easiest to understand.

ENOUGH of mournful melodies, my lute!
Be henceforth joyous, or be henceforth mute.
Song's breath is wasted when it does but fan
The smouldering infelicity of man.

I PLUCK'D this flower, O brighter flower, for thee,
There where the river dies into the sea.
To kiss it the wild west wind hath made free:
Kiss it thyself and give it back to me.

To be as this old elm full loth were I,
That shakes in the autumn storm its palsied head
Hewn by the weird last woodman let me lie
Ere the path rustle with my foliage shed.

Ah, vain, thrice vain in the end, thy hate and rage,
And the shrill tempest of thy clamorous page.
True poets but transcendent lovers be,
And one great love-confession poesy.

His rhymes the poet flings at all men's feet,
And whoso will may trample on his rhymes.
Should Time let die a song that's true and sweet,
The singer's loss were more than match'd by Ti

On Longfellow's Death

No puissant singer he, whose silence grieves
To-day the great West's tender heart and strong;
No singer vast of voice: yet one who leaves
His native air the sweeter for his song.

Byron the Voluptuary

Too avid of earth's bliss, he was of those
Whom Delight flies because they give her chase.
Only the odour of her wild hair blows
Back in their faces hungering for her face.

Antony at Actium

He holds a dubious balance:—yet *that* scale
Whose freight the world is, surely shall prev
No; Cleopatra droppeth into *this*
One counterpoising orient sultry kiss.

Art

The thousand painful steps at last are trod,
At last the temple's difficult door we win;
But perfect on his pedestal, the god
Freezes us hopeless when we enter in.

KEATS

HE dwelt with the bright gods of elder time,
On earth and in their cloudy haunts above.
He loved them: and in recompense sublime,
The gods, alas! gave him their fatal love.

AFTER READING "TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT"

OUR Marlowe's page I close, my Shakspere's ope.
How welcome—after gong and cymbal's din—
The continuity, the long slow slope
And vast curves of the gradual violin!

Shelley and Harriet Westbrook

A star look'd down from heaven and loved a flo[redacted]
Grown in earth's garden—loved it for an hour:

..

Let eyes that trace his orbit in the spheres
Refuse not, to a ruin'd rosebud, tears.

The Play of "King Lear"

Here Love the slain with Love the slayer lies;
Deep drown'd are both in the same sunless pool.
Up from its depths that mirror thundering skies
Bubbles the wan mirth of the mirthless Fool.

To a Poet

Time, the extortioner, from richest beauty
Takes heavy toll and wrings rapacious duty.
Austere of feature if thou carve thy rhyme,
Perchance 'twill pay the lesser tax to Time.

The Year's Minstrelsy

Spring, the low prelude of a lordlier song:
Summer, a music without hint of death:
Autumn, a cadence lingeringly long:
Winter, a pause;—the Minstrel-Year takes breath.

The Ruined Abbey

Flower-fondled, clasp'd in ivy's close caress
It seems allied with Nature, yet apart:—
Of wood's and wave's insensate loveliness
The glad, sad, tranquil, passionate, human

Michelangelo's "Moses"

The captain's might, and mystery of the seer—
Remoteness of Jehovah's colloquist,
Nearness of man's heaven-advocate—are here:
Alone Mount Nebo's harsh foreshadow is mi[redacted]

The Alps

Adieu, white brows of Europe! sovereign brows,
That wear the sunset for a golden tiar.
With me in memory shall your phantoms house
For ever, whiter than yourselves, and higher

The Cathedral Spire

It soars like hearts of hapless men who dare
To sue for gifts the gods refuse to allot;
Who climb for ever toward they know not where,
Baffled for ever by they know not what.

An Epitaph

His friends he loved. His fellest earthly foes—
Cats—I believe he did but feign to hate.
My hand will miss the insinuated nose,
Mine eyes the tail that wagg'd contempt at I

The Metropolitan Underground Railway

Here were a goodly place wherein to die;—
Grown latterly to sudden change averse,
All violent contrasts fain avoid would I
On passing from this world into a worse.

To a Seabird

Fain would I have thee barter fates with me,—
Lone loiterer where the shells like jewels be,
Hung on the fringe and frayed hem of the sea.
But no,—'twere cruel, wild-wing'd Bliss! to thee.

On Dürer's *Melencolia*

What holds her fixed far eyes nor lets them range?
Not the strange sea, strange earth, or heav'n more strange;
But her own phantom dwarfing these great three,
More strange than all, more old than heav'n, earth, sea.

TANTALUS

HE wooes for ever, with foil'd lips of drouth,
The wave that wearies not to mock his mouth.
'Tis Lethe's; they alone that tide have quaff'd
Who never thirsted for the oblivious draught.

A MAIDEN'S EPITAPH

SHE dwelt among us till the flowers, 'tis said,
Grew jealous of her: with precipitate feet,
As loth to wrong them unawares, she fled.
Earth is less fragrant now, and heaven more sweet.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

TO JAMES BROMLEY

With "Wordsworth's Grave"

Ere vandal lords with lust of gold accurst
Deface each hallowed hillside we revere—
Ere cities in their million-throated thirst
Menace each sacred mere—
Let us give thanks because one nook hath been
Unflooded yet by desecration's wave,
The little churchyard in the valley green
That holds our Wordsworth's grave.

'Twas there I plucked these elegiac blooms,
There where he rests 'mid comrades fit and few,

And thence I bring this growth of classic tombs,
An offering, friend, to you—
You who have loved like me his simple themes,
Loved his sincere large accent nobly plain,
And loved the land whose mountains and whose stream
Are lovelier for his strain.

It may be that his manly chant, beside
More dainty numbers, seems a rustic tune;
It may be, thought has broadened since he died
Upon the century's noon;
It may be that we can no longer share
The faith which from his fathers he received;
It may be that our doom is to despair
Where he with joy believed;—

Enough that there is none since risen who sings
A song so gotten of the immediate soul,

So instant from the vital fount of things
Which is our source and goal;
And though at touch of later hands there float
More artful tones than from his lyre he drew,
Ages may pass ere trills another note
So sweet, so great, so true.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

I

THE old rude church, with bare, bald tower, is here;
Beneath its shadow high-born Rotha flows;
Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near,
And with cool murmur lulling his repose.

Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near.
His hills, his lakes, his streams are with him yet.
Surely the heart that read her own heart clear
Nature forgets not soon: 'tis we forget.

We that with vagrant soul his fixity
Have slighted; faithless, done his deep faith wrong;
Left him for poorer loves, and bowed the knee
To misbegotten strange new gods of song.

Yet, led by hollow ghost or beckoning elf
Far from her homestead to the desert bourn,
The vagrant soul returning to herself
Wearily wise, must needs to him return.

To him and to the powers that with him dwell:—
Inflowings that divulged not whence they came;
And that secluded spirit unknowable,
The mystery we make darker with a name;

The Somewhat which we name but cannot know,
Ev'n as we name a star and only see
His quenchless flashings forth, which ever show
And ever hide him, and which are not he.

II

Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave!
When thou wast born, what birth-gift hadst thou then?
To thee what wealth was that the Immortals gave,
The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men?

Not Milton's keen, translunar music thine;
Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless human view;
Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine;
Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

What hadst thou that could make so large amends
For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,
Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends?—
Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

From Shelley's dazzling glow or thunderous haze,
From Byron's tempest-anger, tempest-mirth,
Men turned to thee and found—not blast and blaze,
Tumult of tottering heavens, but peace on earth.

Nor peace that grows by Lethe, scentless flower,
There in white languors to decline and cease;
But peace whose names are also rapture, power,
Clear sight, and love: for these are parts of peace.

III

I hear it vouched the Muse is with us still;—
If less divinely frenzied than of yore,
In lieu of feelings she has wondrous skill
To simulate emotion felt no more.

Not such the authentic Presence pure, that made
This valley vocal in the great days gone!—
In *his* great days, while yet the spring-time played
About him, and the mighty morning shone.

No word-mosaic artificer, he sang
A lofty song of lowly weal and dole.
Right from the heart, right to the heart it sprang,
Or from the soul leapt instant to the soul.

He felt the charm of childhood, grace of youth,
Grandeur of age, insisting to be sung.
The impassioned argument was simple truth
Half-wondering at its own melodious tongue.

Impassioned? ay, to the song's ecstatic core!
But far removed were clangour, storm and feud;
For plenteous health was his, exceeding store
Of joy, and an impassioned quietude.

IV

A hundred years ere he to manhood came,
Song from celestial heights had wandered down,
Put off her robe of sunlight, dew and flame,
And donned a modish dress to charm the Town.

Thenceforth she but festooned the porch of things;
Apt at life's lore, incurious what life meant.
Dextrous of hand, she struck her lute's few strings;
Ignobly perfect, barrenly content.

Unflushed with ardour and unblanched with awe,
Her lips in profitless derision curled,
She saw with dull emotion—if she saw—
The vision of the glory of the world.

The human masque she watched, with dreamless eyes
In whose clear shallows lurked no trembling shade:
The stars, unkenned by her, might set and rise,
Unmarked by her, the daisies bloom and fade.

The age grew sated with her sterile wit.
Herself waxed weary on her loveless throne.
Men felt life's tide, the sweep and surge of it,
And craved a living voice, a natural tone.

For none the less, though song was but half true,
The world lay common, one abounding theme.
Man joyed and wept, and fate was ever new,
And love was sweet, life real, death no dream.

In sad stern verse the rugged scholar-sage
Bemoaned his toil unvalued, youth uncheered.
His numbers wore the vesture of the age,
But, 'neath it beating, the great heart was heard.

From dewy pastures, uplands sweet with thyme,
A virgin breeze freshened the jaded day.
It wafted Collins' lonely vesper-chime,
It breathed abroad the frugal note of Gray.

It fluttered here and there, nor swept in vain
The dusty haunts where futile echoes dwell,—
Then, in a cadence soft as summer rain,
And sad from Auburn voiceless, drooped and fell.

It drooped and fell, and one 'neath northern skies,
With southern heart, who tilled his father's field,
Found Poesy a-dying, bade her rise
And touch quick nature's hem and go forth healed.

On life's broad plain the ploughman's conquering share
Upturned the fallow lands of truth anew,
And o'er the formal garden's trim parterre
The peasant's team a ruthless furrow drew.

Bright was his going forth, but clouds ere long
Whelmed him; in gloom his radiance set, and those
Twin morning stars of the new century's song,
Those morning stars that sang together, rose.

In elvish speech the *Dreamer* told his tale
Of marvellous oceans swept by fateful wings.—
The *Seër* strayed not from earth's human pale,
But the mysterious face of common things

He mirrored as the moon in Rydal Mere
Is mirrored, when the breathless night hangs blue:
Strangely remote she seems and wondrous near,
And by some nameless difference born anew.

V

Peace—peace—and rest! Ah, how the lyre is loth,
Or powerless now, to give what all men seek!
Either it deadens with ignoble sloth
Or deafens with shrill tumult, loudly weak.

Where is the singer whose large notes and clear
Can heal and arm and plenish and sustain?
Lo, one with empty music floods the ear,
And one, the heart refreshing, tires the brain.

And idly tuneful, the loquacious throng
Flutter and twitter, prodigal of time,
And little masters make a toy of song
Till grave men weary of the sound of rhyme.

And some go prankt in faded antique dress,
Abhorring to be hale and glad and free;
And some parade a conscious naturalness,
The scholar's not the child's simplicity.

Enough;—and wisest who from words forbear.
The kindly river rails not as it glides;
And suave and charitable, the winning air
Chides not at all, or only him who chides.

VI

Nature! we storm thine ear with choric notes.
Thou answerest through the calm great nights and days,
"Laud me who will: not tuneless are your throats;
Yet if ye paused I should not miss the praise."

We falter, half-rebuked, and sing again.
We chant thy desertness and haggard gloom,
Or with thy splendid wrath inflate the strain,
Or touch it with thy colour and perfume.

One, his melodious blood aflame for thee,
Wooed with fierce lust, his hot heart world-defiled.
One, with the upward eye of infancy,
Looked in thy face, and felt himself thy child.

Thee he approached without distrust or dread—
Beheld thee throned, an awful queen, above—
Climbed to thy lap and merely laid his head
Against thy warm wild heart of mother-love.

He heard that vast heart beating—thou didst press
Thy child so close, and lov'dst him unaware.
Thy beauty gladdened him; yet he scarce less
Had loved thee, had he never found thee fair!

For thou wast not as legendary lands
To which with curious eyes and ears we roam.
Nor wast thou as a fane mid solemn sands,
Where palmers halt at evening. Thou wast home.

And here, at home, still bides he; but he sleeps;
Not to be wakened even at thy word;
Though we, vague dreamers, dream he somewhere keeps
An ear still open to thy voice still heard,—

Thy voice, as heretofore, about him blown,
For ever blown about his silence now;
Thy voice, though deeper, yet so like his own
That almost, when he sang, we deemed 'twas thou!

VII

Behind Helm Crag and Silver Howe the sheen
Of the retreating day is less and less.
Soon will the lordlier summits, here unseen,
Gather the night about their nakedness.

The half-heard bleat of sheep comes from the hill.
Faint sounds of childish play are in the air.
The river murmurs past. All else is still.
The very graves seem stiller than they were.

Afar though nation be on nation hurled,
And life with toil and ancient pain depressed,
Here one may scarce believe the whole wide world
Is not at peace, and all man's heart at rest.

Rest! 'twas the gift *he* gave; and peace! the shade
He spread, for spirits fevered with the sun.
To him his bounties are come back—here laid
In rest, in peace, his labour nobly done.

THE END

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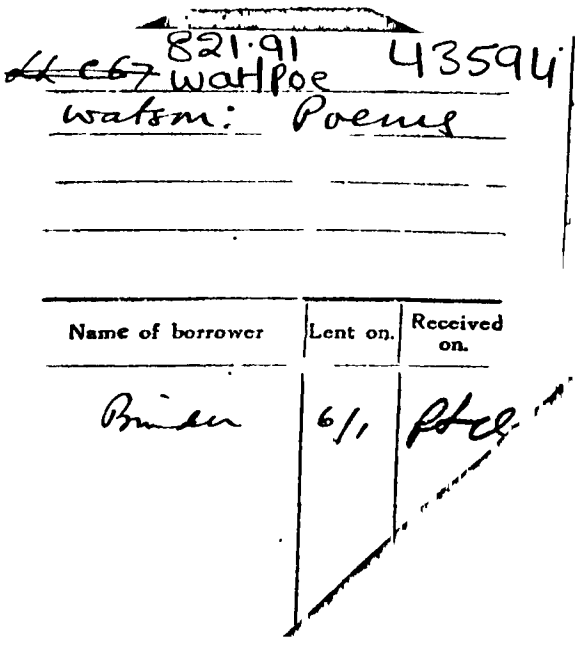

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